Galveston Bay Area Chapter – Texas Master Naturalists

The Midden

March/April 2008

SMILES

by Sara Snell, President GBAC-TMN

SMILE – because all of you deserve a huge pat on the back for all our accomplishments the past year.

SMILE – because we had a great showing at the Brazos Bend Campout sponsored by the Gulf Coast chapter.

SMILE – because we have 24 potential Master Naturalists in our eleventh class that started on 2/14/08.

SMILE – because we have an awesome year of Advanced Training already scheduled.

SMILE – because we have on-going Stewardship activities in all parts of Galveston Bay.

SMILE – just because!!!
Please join me in welcoming the 24 members of the Spring Class. Many are well on their way not only to completing the class, but also to completing their first 40 hours of service and 8 hours of advanced training. **SMILE** – because at this rate many will also recertify this year!

Sara

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CLASS
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Will Roughton
Ann Abernathy


Wetlands Education and
Recreation Center
THE GREAT TEXAS
COASTAL BIRDING
TRAIL
BAYTOWN
Eddie V. Gray
Wetlands Education
and Recreation Center

APRIL/MAY

ADVANCED TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
by Shirley Foster, AT Chairperson

Up, Up, and Away- Birding by Design
Moody Gardens Aquarium,
Tues., April 22, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Class size limited to 50
5 Hours AT, Cost $6.50
Biologist and Master Naturalist, Spring 2007, **Diane Olsen's** presentation will enable us to SEE and HEAR all about bird anatomies, from feet to beak. A Rain Forest tour to view living specimens and birding on the grounds is included.
Bring lunch, beverage, $6.50 for entrance into the Rain Forest and binoculars for birding outside.
Maps will be sent to those who register.
For more information contact Project Leader, Louise Bell ltbell@comcast.net
Register with Emmeline Dodd
TXDODD@aol.com

Estuarine Smorgasbord: A Look at Marsh and Sea Grasses, Mud Algae, and Phytoplankton.
Fri., May 9 or Sat., May 10, 9:00AM - NOON
Galveston Island State Park
Class size each day will be limited to 20
3 Hours AT, Cost $2.00
Two identical one-day seminars with both classes and field excursions presented by **Dr. Steve Alexander (Fall 2006).** The purpose of the class will be to provide a better understanding of bay producers and their role in estuarine productivity.
There will be a $2.00 Park Admission Fee, payable that day.
Directions and what to bring will be given to those who register.
For more information contact Project Leader, Diane Olsen dianeo@wt.net
Register for either day with Emmeline Dodd
TXDODD@aol.com

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES
by Dick Benoit, Stewardship Chairperson

March Special Project of the Month
Trash Bash at various sites

Saturday, March 29, 2008 9 AM til Noon or ?
Free lunch, Souvenirs, Door Prizes, Entertainment
http://www.trashbash.org/cleanup_sites.htm

April Project of the Month
Anahuac NWR Butterfly Garden Maintenance
Saturday, April 12, 2008 9 AM until Noon
Maintain our adopted garden plot

April Special Project of the Month
Texas City Prairie Preserve
Tuesday, April 15, 2008
Prairie Maintenance is necessary for prairie restoration

May Project of the Month
Marsh Mania held at a number of sites Saturday, **May 31, 2008.** This is the eighth year it has been held and this year it will be a combination of **Marsh Mania/Prairie Pandemonium** at Armand Bayou Nature Center. **9 AM until Noon**, t-shirts, prizes presented when the work is completed.
Contact ABNC for details.

October Project of the Month
Prairie Pandemonium at ABNC
Saturday, October 18, 2008
Second annual restoration of prairie

Ongoing activities:

Mondays - **Reitan Point**, second and fourth, Contact Liz Gimmler gimmler@consolidated.net
Tuesdays - **Texas City Prairie Preserve**, Contact Marybeth Arnold mbarnold@aol.com
Wednesdays - **Wetland Restoration** Team, Contact Charriss York cyork@tamu.edu
Fridays - **Sundance Garden**, Contact Trudy Belz trudybelz@aol.com
Prairie Friday, Armand Bayou Nature Center, Dick Benoit RBenoitTex@aol.com 9AM until Noon

PRAIRIE *by Dick Benoit*

O N D E R I N G S

In part our mission statement reads, "… provide education and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within our community." The first part of 2008 has been remarkable in achieving this mission.

Monday, January 14, at Reitan Point Prairie Project of the Month completed their first year of restoration of over 300 four inch pots and 100 one gallon and five gallon pots of prairie grasses and forbs under the leadership of Liz Gimmler.

Saturday, February 16, at Sheldon State Park Prairie the Amigos for America, a group of over 50 youths and mentors, planted over 500 one gallon pots of grasses. The Master Naturalist mentors were Tom Solomon, Jim Duron, Diane Humes, Beth Frohme, and Gerre Guerrant.

Tuesday, February 26, at Texas City Prairie Preserve, a group of 80 eighth grade students from an Episcopal School near Dallas, planted over 500 one gallon prairie plants. Master Naturalist mentors were Marybeth Arnold, Sara Snell, Tim O'Connell, Janice Schrager, Rebecca Smith, Della Barbato, Gib Larson and Henry Criss.

Saturday, March 1, at Armand Bayou Nature Center Prairie a group of about 30 Boy Scouts planted 500 one gallon grasses under the mentorship of Tom Solomon and Jim Duron.

Also on Wednesday, March 5, a group of Central Michigan University students spent their spring break doing a service project, and helped plant the prairie at Armand Bayou Nature Center.

WETLAND *by Diane Humes*

A N D E R I N G S

Last year the Wetland Restoration Team partnered with Gulf Coast Chapter Master Naturalists in a multi-pronged attempt to restore a bit of native vegetation along Sims Bayou. One group planted the shoreline at Milby Park, while a second group journeyed upstream in a TPWD boat to plant on the opposite side of the bayou. Inspection of these planting sites this fall revealed that only some of the cutgrass and swamp lilies had survived, all at Milby Park. Back to the drawing board…

Sims Bayou enters the Houston Ship Channel a short way downstream from Milby Park. This stream section is fairly natural, i.e., **not** lined in concrete. Sims Bayou is lined with trees; many bird species and other wildlife call it home. Stream banks are eroded and steep, but with a few wide and shallow shelves. Water levels fluctuate by several feet with the tides. Huge volumes of trash float up and down the bayou and lodge in the coves and along the banks. This is a place that could definitely use some restoration!

So, the Wetland Restoration Team has started 2008 with a Strike Force incursion into Dickinson Bayou for swamp lilies to plant at Milby Park. (To learn what **really** happened**,** see Vic Madamba's "Wetland Restoration."**)** We have planted 200+ cutgrass and swamp lilies along the shoreline at Milby Park and a small cove upstream. This secluded cove is cut by a little stream draining downhill into the bayou.

Wetland Wonderings continued

It is overhung by trees and thick with underbrush vegetation – elephant ears (*Colocasia esculenta*), alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*), and festooned with air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*). These opportunistic species hail from Asia, South America, and West Africa, respectively. These swamp lilies and cutgrass will grow, spread, and help provide some stability and beauty to Sims Bayou - maybe overcome the invaders.

The Wetland Restoration Team has withstood cold and wind; now the sun is out, the land and water are warming, and the plants will grow quickly. Watch out for the Wetland Restoration Team – Guerre, Dick, Lynne, Charriss, Marissa, Diane, Milt, Vic, Tom, Ellen, Laurie, Susan - in our quest to replant the wetlands of the world!

Green Corner: How You Can Make a Difference

Reasons to REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE from the Green Team

Did you know:

- Each ***recycled aluminum can*** saves enough electricity to run a TV for three hours.
- Compact fluorescent bulbs use 70 to 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last 10 times longer. Users can save up to $59 over the life of the bulb.
- The millions of ***two-stroke engines*** in the US produce 1.1 billion pounds of toxic emissions annually. These include lawn and garden equipment (chain saws, leaf blowers, trimmers), dirt bikes, mopeds, jet skis, and small outboard motors. Use human-powered devices when possible!
- A ***car engine idling*** 10 minutes less per day can keep 550 pounds of carbon dioxide out of the air every year. Turn off your car engine when in line at the drive-in bank, picking up children at school, and during other lengthy waits in your car.
- Less than 20% of all ***junk mail*** is recycled. That's 340,000 garbage trucks each year filled to the brim. Stop unwanted catalogues. Catalog Choice is a free service to help with this, at http://www.catalogchoice.org/. As of February 2008, 558,225 persons had already opted out of 6,816,353 catalogs**.**

Plastic deserves a special mention:

- The Earth Policy Institute estimates that making ***plastic for bottles*** requires about 1.5 million barrels of oil, which is enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year. To make the plastic, process and fill the bottle, transport it to market and deal with the waste would be like ***filling up a quarter of the bottle with oil***. Less than 25% of the bottles are recycled.
- Over 6 billion gallons of ***bottled water*** are consumed annually in the United States representing $11 billion in sales. The FDA regulates bottled water, but standards are weaker than EPA standards for tap water. For example, ***E.coli*** is allowed in bottled water, but not in tap water!
- Each year the US consumes an estimated 12 million barrels of oil to manufacture ***plastic bags*** that end up in landfills and take 1000 years to decompose. When they end up in the ocean they become deadly food for marine life. Many stores now sell reusable shopping bags. You probably already have some in your closet. Use them! ("Bottled vs Tap" by Diane Humes)

WETLAND RESTORATION

" Mud N More Mud, Muck Up 2 Our Knees "

by Vic Madamba

On a cool partly cloudy Wednesday morning, our Wetland Restoration team met at the Dickinson Bayou Boat Launch for another mission. After a short briefing by our team leader, Charriss York, we loaded two canoes and kayaks with buckets, muck boots, shovels and launched. Our mission: to dig up swamp lilies growing along the banks of the mighty Dickinson Bayou, a mile down stream. "Yahoo mates, paddle straight, paddle true, Marissa knows where to go," came a voice in the distance. Against the wind and current too, we paddled our way to the swamp lilies along the banks of the bayou. We huff and puff keeping our paddles true until finally, the lilies came into view. Mud and more mud, muck up to our knees, gees, we were kids again: shovels digging, buckets filling, fifty lilies, a hundred, and just three hundred more to go. Dig deep, pull a bunch, separating them and passing them on; to Charriss, Diane, or Marissa and into the buckets they go: isn't this fun. Mud on our pants, mud on our shirts and some had mud on their butts too, but the buckets were full, so it was time to load it was already noon. We bid our goodbyes to the swamp lilies left behind, along the banks of Dickinson Bayou. To and fro, our paddles straight and true, another successful day as Charriss, would say, for we are the Wetland Restoration Team: "Leading the Way."

LEFT 2 RIGHT: Charriss York, Marissa Sipocz, Diane Humes, Gerre Guerrant
Photo: Vic Madamba
4 More Wetland Restoration Information, Call: 281-218-6253

Naturalist Spotlight of the Month

Dick Benoit "Our Godfather"

by Irene Yodzis and Mary Vogas

His parents came to the United States from Canada during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Dick Benoit was born in Detroit, Michigan and graduated from a parochial grade school and high school in the area. Biology was his favorite subject and he wanted to become a biologist. A relative, a nun and teacher, were a big influence in this decision.

His activities as a youth included Boy Scouts, helping the elderly, biking, hiking, skiing and baseball and football. He also played with an amateur semi-pro basketball group, predecessor of the Detroit Pistons. He raised worms and fished and hunted rats with a pellet gun. He enjoyed camping and after high school, he tried camping alone for three weeks in the northern woods.

He spent twelve years teaching full time while he studied for his degree from Wayne State University. During this period he was also married and had five children. While teaching middle school, he taught his own children. He later spent six years getting his Master's Degree in Science Education at the University of Michigan. Some of his jobs, during this time, included teaching, operating a bookstore, coaching basketball and working at a bank and post office. Among his activities, he sponsored a high school group who did hiking, biking and skiing. At one point, he was paying insurance premiums on seven cars!

In 1970, he decided his focus would be on becoming a Master Naturalist. He became interested in hawk watching in 1974 when he took an Audubon field trip in Michigan. For thirteen years he was editor of a hawk migration journal for the Great Lakes region. He also participated in a ten-year study of nesting yellow warblers and made 1,000 information cards on nesting birds in that area.

In 1987, he received a Teacher of the Year Award and was featured in *Newsweek* magazine. He also received training in Activities Integrating Mathematics and Science (AIMS) and then gave workshops for teachers in Texas, Ohio, and Michigan that integrated mathematics and science. He is a National Science Teacher Association life member. He taught 36 years in parochial and public schools. He came to Texas and starting in 1994, taught a science methods course and was a supervisor of student teachers at the University of Houston for five years.

He took Texas Master Naturalist and Master Gardener courses in 1999. He has always enjoyed the feeling of open spaces and therefore loves the prairies. Michigan also has some prairies. He is active with the prairie restoration team at Armand Bayou. He transplants grass, collects seeds, makes seed balls and does other related activities. Last fall, he gave a wonderful workshop and provided a booklet on prairie grasses. He also teaches a class on hawk watching. He probably has the best collection of hawk books in the country. He also helps with the new Master Naturalist classes. He has accumulated over 8,000 hours of service in TMN. This is Dick's 50th year in teaching!

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Master Naturalists Should Look Up Occasionally

by Steve Alexander
Photo by Allan Treiman

The title may express a new and radical idea, but it's one I can't take credit for. The credit goes to Allan Treiman, our presenter for the January 15, 2008 Advanced Training workshop on Daytime Sky Phenomena. Allan used this as the subtitle of his presentation, issuing a challenge to the audience of 38 Master Naturalists and guests to lift their heads to the sky on occasion, instead of just looking down and around.

Why should we look up? Because light interacts with clouds, dust, smoke, pollen, rain drops, and ice crystals to produce a variety of spectacular sights visible in the daytime sky. Many examples were presented, but the two that stuck in my head were a blue sky, the result of pure air, and a rainbow, the result of light passing through raindrops. The most beautiful to my eyes were the pollen corona, lovely golden rings caused by light striking pollen grains floating in the air.

Allan may not be aware of it, but he confessed to being an amateur naturalist at heart. He stated that he became interested in these daytime sky phenomena after he observed them on his own. As a result of these initial sightings, he has gone on to become very knowledgeable in this area. His knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject may have gotten many in his audience to take him up on his advice to look up.

Flying saucers were on the list of daytime events handed out to the attendees, but evidently were not held in high enough regard to be mentioned by the presenter. That fact would have definitely upset the numerous UFO buffs and the many who have sighted alien spacecraft recently in the daytime skies.

Corona

Here is an image of iridescence in thin clouds, making a 'corona' around the sun, taken from Allan's front porch last year. This is exactly how it looked, with the multiple concentric bands of color, surrounding the sun, appearing in the thin clouds. Coronas and iridescence like this form as light is diffracted by/around small particles of ice or water that make up the clouds. These are not rainbows, which form as light goes through water particles.

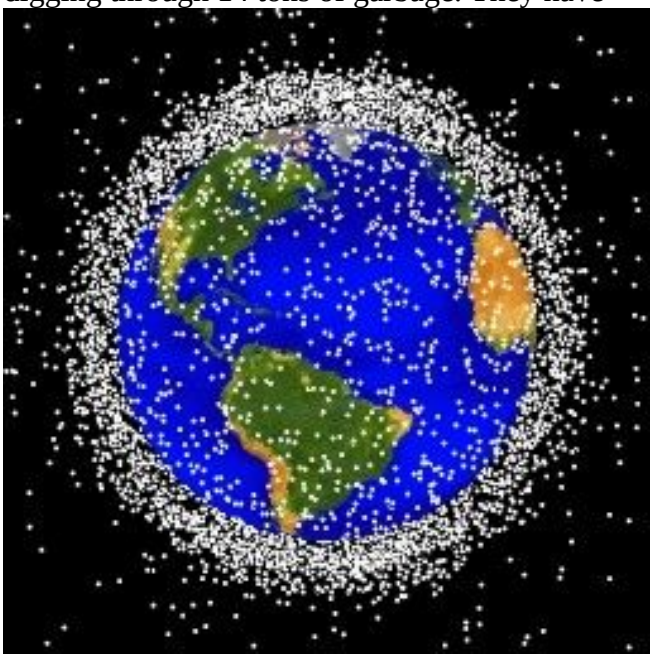
Spotlight on Dick Benoit continued

He had some medical problems last year, but is on the rebound now. We are so blessed to have him in our group. He is always very willing to share his vast knowledge of nature with anyone. He is our loving godfather supplying support to all of us.

GARBOLOGY 101
by Diane Humes

Humans are tool-using animals. Humans have created trash for 2 million years. The evidence of human presence is unequivocal from the first waste flakes of a stone tool made by early *Homo sapiens*, to the 10,000 + objects currently in low earth orbit.

Archaeologists study artifacts left behind by ancient civilizations to try to learn what ancient cultures were like. Dr. William Rathje and his students from the University of Arizona study modern garbage. Beginning as an anthropology class exercise in human behavior, since 1973 nearly 750 students have undertaken the task of digging through 14 tons of garbage. They have



catalogued, weighed, sorted and counted objects from 15,000 household samples and 15 landfills in the U. S., Canada, and Mexico. This thirty-year study became the Garbage Project, a comprehensive study of "fresh artifacts," yielding surprising information about the household waste stream and the modern landfill and insights into our modern culture.

The Garbage Project has found that some "facts" turn out to be false and some human behaviors are counter-intuitive. For example, during times of meat and sugar shortages, the amounts of those items actually increased in the garbage, contrary to expectations. People seemed to be hoarding, which led to increased spoilage, not increased use. People were also found to expand the amount of trash discarded commensurate with the size of the trash can. When the city of Phoenix switched to larger 90-gallon trash containers to facilitate mechanized trash collection and save labor costs, the amount of trash in the landfill increased by one third, although the population decreased by 25%.

Our methods of dealing with garbage, no matter how modern, are variations of the four ways human civilizations have used for thousands of years – **dumping** it, **burning** it, **recycling** it, and **minimizing** the volume of material goods, now called "source reduction." When humans gave up the hunter-gatherer lifestyle for sedentary civilization, garbage accumulation eventually reached a crisis. Although we have been taught that cities arose as a consequence of human settlements and farming, the archaeologist, Gordon R. Wiley argues (only **partly** in jest) that people "may have been propelled along the path to civilization by the need for a degree of organization sufficiently sophisticated, and a class structure suitably stratified, to make possible the disposal of mounting piles of debris."

The modern sanitary landfill originated after 1900 when the connection between illness and open dumps was realized. The procedure consists simply of covering each day's supply of garbage with about six inches of relatively inert material that won't decompose – usually soil, but crushed glass and plastic foam have been used. During WWII this was the disposal method preferred by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for all military installations. After the war, millions of soldiers were familiar with sanitary landfills and thousands were trained in their operation. Sanitary landfills were seen as preferable to incinerators and it was thought that they could be built to convert wetlands and other marginal land into useful and productive property.

By 1945, one hundred American cities had sanitary landfills; by 1960, there were fourteen hundred.

Today, the ecological values of wetlands are better known, as are the risks associated with liquids leaching out of landfills into the water table. Landfill sites are carefully selected to avoid groundwater and surface water contamination. Some places like Long Island and Florida are considered completely unsuitable. However, there is still plenty of room in the U.S. for landfills. By one calculation, even at the current rate of garbage production, all American trash for the next 1000 years could fit into a landfill space 120 feet deep and 44 miles square – less than 0.1 percent of U.S. surface area.

A modern sanitary landfill usually begins as a huge hole – 25 to 50 feet deep. If excavated, the soil is saved for covering the trash, but the next step involves installing a bottom lining made from several feet of dense clay and plastic liners to contain liquids. The idea is to make sure that what goes into the landfill, stays in the landfill. Older landfills – 2/3 of all of them – do not have liners. Then gravel or sand is added to a depth of several feet. Garbage is added in an organized fashion to ensure safe access by trucks and equipment and proper rainfall runoff. Pipes are laid throughout to collect liquids and methane gas, which will be generated for about 20 years even after a landfill is closed and capped. Leachate is either piped back into the landfill or directed to the sewage treatment plant. A landfill is designed to have a calculated size and working life span. An 80-acre landfill will serve a community of 500,000 for about 20 years at a cost of $33 million to operate and $8 million when it is closed.

After excavating trash down as far as 80 feet, the Garbage Project found that trash in a landfill, even organics and food waste, does NOT decompose. Newspapers are perfectly readable from 1930, hot dogs and heads of lettuce appear untouched after 30 years, bags of lawn clippings are pristine in the middle of the landfill. Other findings are also counter to our expectations. We expect that plastic bottles, disposable diapers, food waste with packaging, and yard waste must be over-filling our landfills. But, in fact, plastic accounts for less than 1% of the volume in a landfill; it is highly compressible and is “light-weighted” by the manufacturers. Disposable diapers account for only 2% of the contents of a landfill, despite that 16 billion are used each year in America. Food waste and packaging account for less than 1% and combined with yard waste takes up 7% of a landfill. The category occupying the highest volume in a landfill is paper, filling up 40% of volume, with newspapers alone occupying 13%. The next largest category is construction debris with 12%. So, if we wish to reduce the amount of waste being buried for future archaeologists, the most dramatic action would be to **remove paper and construction debris** from the waste stream.

As with the sanitary landfill, all other methods of dealing with solid waste – incineration, recycling, and source reduction – have good and bad points that need to be carefully considered. And, all methods are probably needed to tackle our solid waste issues. We are always trying to solve multiple problems with a single solution; landfills used to create land, incineration to generate power, recycling to make money. But, just getting rid of the garbage is a worthy goal like police, fire, or public health, even if it is expensive. It’s not exciting, but sure is important.

Source:

Rathje, William and Cullen Murphy. *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001.

Saving the Kemp's Ridley, One Turtle at a Time

Article and Photo by Steve Alexander

In 27 years of teaching, one of my favorite experiences occurred on a field trip to Port Aransas, Texas in May of 1997. On that day, my students and I traveled by Jetty Boat from Port Aransas across the channel to San Jose Island to cleanup marine debris.

We began our cleanup after being dropped off on the island, starting at the jetty and working our way eastward down the beach. In two hours, we had cleared over 1,000 pieces of debris from a mile of beach, the majority made of plastic or Styrofoam. We tabulated our results and started back to the jetty.

After walking halfway back, we saw a sea turtle stranded on the sand. The push of the surf had washed it up the beach, leaving it exposed on the wet sand (see picture). At first, we thought it was dead, but then it raised its head. But, lacking strength, the head fell back down an instant later.

After a short discussion, we thought it best to carry it back out into the water. So, two guys lifted the turtle, one on each side, and carried it into the surf. They let go and as they walked to shore, we watched.

As we watched, the waves pushed the turtle closer and closer until it landed on the sand. We tried again. The two carried it out and let it go. Again it washed ashore.

It was clear we needed a new plan. We decided to carry it back to the Jetty Boat, whose dock was one-half mile away. The Jetty Boat was the only way we could transport it ourselves. And the dock was the only place someone else could come to pick it up. Although I was unsure of the laws, I thought that handling a protected species probably wasn't allowed. But we had no choice.

So, the guys lifted the turtle and we began our march to the dock. Before starting, one-half mile didn't seem like much, but soon reality set in. The turtle likely weighed 75-100 pounds and didn't have handles, so was dropped on the sand several times. The guys struggled with the weight and frequently rested.

We found beach driftwood and used it to make a carrying platform. Although the carrying became a little easier, the platform didn't do much to decrease the animal's weight. Rests became longer and more frequent.

But finally we made it to the Jetty Boat dock. To our surprise, we were met by two individuals, one from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and one from the ARK (Animal Rehabilitation Keep) in Port Aransas. I'm not sure who contacted them, but obviously we attracted the attention of someone who knew whom to call.

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A Shell of a Workshop

by Steve Alexander

If you missed the Advanced Training workshop "Shell We Gather by the Seaside," you missed a great opportunity to learn about the common shells found on our beach. The shell workshop, consisting of a classroom session on February 26th, and a fieldtrip to Galveston Island State Park, was led by presenter, Claudia Edwards, and project leader, Mel Measeles.

Before the workshop, each participant was assigned a shell to research. They then presented what they had learned to others during the classroom session. In all, 24 shells were covered, with information presented on common name, scientific name, habitat, diet, and interesting facts.

It was the interesting facts that were the most interesting. I'll bet you didn't know lightning whelks have left handed shells (most snail shells are right handed); oysters are champions at filtering water, passing up to 7 gallons per hour through their gills; quahog clams can live to a ripe old age of 40 years; up to 8 hours may be required for an oyster drill to make a hole in another shell; and the state shell of South Carolina is the lettered olive.

Almost every shell assigned for classroom discussion was found on the beach during the field trip. Since arks far outnumbered other shells, many participants took time to learn to distinguish the three arks found on our beach: blood, ponderous and incongruous.

Leo Svmmank found a Texas venus

Several added features made the workshop especially memorable. In addition to a useful booklet for future reference, each participant received an oyster drill necklace and a bag of shells (thanks Mel!) And participants got a good look at perhaps the first ever bay scallop T-shirt (thanks Vic!)

Darla's First Day

Oh, how the wind blows today . . . cool and crisp.

The tall golden grasses swaying to the right of me.

Just now a wood ant walks across my paper; curious I suppose.

If I could tell the wood ant something about my writing on this deck

Under the winter trees, it would be this:

Welcome to my journal page, I'm just as small as you in God's eyes.

Darla Racz
Journal Time-- February 14, 2008
First Day, Spring Master Naturalist Class

Sea Turtle continued

The one from the ARK, Andi, inspected our turtle. She said it was an adult Kemp's Ridley, the most highly endangered of all sea turtles. Andi lifted its rear end, and after peering underneath, pronounced it a "she."

The two lifted the turtle and carried it off. Several days later, we inquired at the ARK and were told our Ridley had a bacterial infection and was being treated with antibiotics.

Several weeks later, I got the news. Our turtle had fully recovered and had been released. When I told my students, they were thrilled.

I know better than to believe she thinks of us. After her release, she probably did what sea turtles do. And the one thing I hope she did was to mate and have hundreds of offspring. If she did that, then we helped save not just her, but a whole species.

Guppies from Julie

by Julie Massey

The Spring 2008 class is well underway with 24 new Master Naturalists in training!

We had a great day at the Eddie Gray Wetlands Center in Baytown, hosted by Tracy Prothro (Master Naturalist and center director) and her staff! The class learned about plankton from our own Dr. Steve Alexander and had the opportunity to search for plankton with microscopes! (Steve also did a terrific presentation on what is a naturalist – historically and at present during the first class. He highlighted your work in restoration and education – the Master Naturalists of today!)

The class also enjoyed Alecya Gallaway's presentation on the historical uses of Galveston Bay which included some of her new research.

Another day featured Dr. Sammy Ray with some of the best oysters ever – salty and juicy. Yum! Nathan Veatch dazzled the class with his squid dissection expertise and the class gyotakued (fish printed)! What a day!

Please plan to join the class when you can! Many thanks to Barb Ellisor and all of the volunteers who are helping with the class! If you would like to volunteer with the class, please contact Barb!

Introducing Texas AgriLife Extension Service!

AgriLIFE EXTENSION
Texas A&M System

Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

What is Texas AgriLife? Have you heard - Texas Cooperative Extension now has a new name, identity and logo – Texas AgriLife Extension Service! Wow!

Our mission is the same: improving the lives of people, businesses and communities across Texas and beyond through high-quality, relevant education. Carrying out this mission is a massive undertaking - one that requires the commitment of the agency's employees and our volunteers like you, the Galveston Bay Area Master Naturalists.

Volunteers are the real heart and hands of AgriLife Extension programs, extending our reach into every community and every neighborhood in Texas.

Thanks so much for your commitment to our local natural resources and the people of the Galveston Bay Area, and for helping Texas AgriLife make a difference in the lives of Texans!

The Midden

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5115 Highway 3
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For comments on this issue or to suggest content for future issues, please contact **Nathan Veatch at 281-480-6985** or by e-mail at nveatch@swbell.net

Communications Team

Steve Alexander	Team Leader
Alan Wilde	Emails
Carolyn Miles	Web page
Nathan Veatch	*The Midden* Editor

Contributors

Steve Alexander, Dick Benoit, Claudia Edwards,
Diane Humes, Mel Measeles, photographer,
Margaret Canavan, Vic Matamba